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ABSTRACT

This publication contains a summary of the discussions and conclusions of a Council of Europe symposium on the organization of modern language teaching/learning in the form of a unit/credit system, in order to allow for an approach based on the individual motivations and capacities of the adult learner. Principal discussion topics include: new forms of organization of the linguistic content; types of evaluation within a unit/credit system; and means of implementing a unit/credit system in the teaching/learning of modern languages in adult education. Conclusions include practical suggestions and recommendations for instructional organization and research. Appendices contain a list of participants and a schematic inventory of language roles, activities and uses, entitled "Toward a Situational Definition of Language Contents in Foreign Languages." (AM)

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COUNCIL OF EUROPE

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Modern Language Learning in Adult Education

FL 003 778

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STRASBOURG
1971

Strasbourg, 24 November 1971 [illegible]

COMMITTEE FOR OUT-OF-SCHOOL EDUCATION
AND CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

Linguistic content, means of evaluation and their interaction in the teaching and learning of modern languages in adult education

Symposium organised at Rüschlikon
3 - 7 May 1971

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. Organisation

This Symposium on "Linguistic content, means of evaluation and their interaction in the teaching and learning of modern languages in adult education" has been organised at Rüschlikon (Zurich) by the Swiss Ministry of Education as a part of the "Intensified European programme for modern languages" carried out by the Council for Cultural Co-operation of the Council of Europe.

The Swiss Ministry entrusted the Foundation for European Languages and Educational Centres ("Eurocentres") in Zürich with the organisation of the Symposium which took place at the "Gottlieb Duttweiler Institute for Economic and Social Studies".

The Symposium had been preceded by a meeting on 17 and 18 February 1971, organised by the Eurocentres with a view to discussing the approach of the sub-themes as well as plans and contents of the experts' contributions.

The Symposium was attended by 36 delegates from 20 member countries of the CCC and by 20 experts or observers from various countries. A full list of participants is given in Appendix I.

Director of the Symposium was Mr. Erh. J.C. Waespi Director of the Foundation for European Language and Educational Centres, while Dr. Gérard Bodemer, Head of the Eurocentres' Department of Pedagogics, was in charge of its organisation.

The Council of Europe was represented by Dr. Herbert Jocher, Deputy Head of the Division for Out-of-School Education and Cultural Development, and Miss Antonietta De Vigili, Administrator, Division for Out-of-School Education. The Swiss Government was represented by Mr. Wilfried Martel, Secretary General, Federal Department of the Interior, Head of Division of Culture, and Mr. Gérard M. Schuwey, Scientific Assistant, Division of Culture.

2. Aims

The aim of the Symposium was to examine the possibility of organising modern language teaching/learning in the form of a unit/credit system, in order to allow an approach based on the individual motivations and capacities of the adult learner.

Special attention was given to the following aspects:

(a) new forms of organisation of the linguistic content;

(b) types of evaluation within a unit/credit system;

(c) means of implementation; outline of a phased plan of work.

3. Methods of work

Plenary sessions, with introductory papers followed by discussions.

Group work on the following three sub-themes:

(a) linguistic contents;

(b) types of evaluation;

(c) means of implementation of a unit/credit system.

Working groups were split up into one French-speaking and two English-speaking groups.

The findings of the groups were presented in Conclusions for each sub-group. On the basis of these conclusions the final Conclusions of the Symposium were worked out by a specially appointed committee and then presented and adopted at the final plenary session. The participants emphasised that the results achieved should be carried further by a proper follow-up plan.

4. Working documents

A large amount of working documents had been specially prepared for this Symposium and were distributed either beforehand or during the meeting.

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II. DIGEST OF CONTRIBUTIONS TO PLENARY SESSIONS

A. Introductory talk by M. Gorosch, General Rapporteur

1. We are facing a new educational structure, that of permanent education in which the education of adults is incorporated, forming an integral part of the educational system.

Now, educational authorities have conceived the idea of recurrent education, which offers elastic and democratic combinations of theory and practice, of studies and work. This is a social feature which we all have to accept.

Educational experts recommend the following educational schemes for the implementation of this recurrent education:

(a) the credit system built on units which can be accumulated and combined in very elastic ways;

(b) continuous assessment as suitable form of evaluation for such a unit/credit system.

2. Obviously, the definition of language units is closely related to that of linguistic contents. What linguistic contents should a language unit have to correspond to a given activity, to given sets of language situations?

A unit would seem to be something quantifiable; it may be possible to quantify knowledge, but what about skill? There is no fixed relation between a language situation and its linguistic components. How will it be possible to relate a unit to some given fields of activities? Well, these are questions which the participants will discuss. In my study (1) I have mentioned one way of describing linguistic contents in relation to language activities or tasks; it is the language profile. There is one profile for the task: dimensions on one axis, levels or quanta on the other. Let us take the column vocabulary versus grammar.

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(1) Some current problems concerning linguistic contents and evaluation in modern language teaching/learning for adults (document EES/Symposium 53,2).

To accept a social development like "recurrent education" is one thing; to accept pedagogical schemes recommended by educational experts, is another. The concepts of the unit/credit system and its linking with continuous assessment, are built on general, theoretical assumptions, and it is a task of the language experts to submit them and their applicability in the language fields, to a critical study.

3. Concerning linguistic contents, there is an assumption that it is possible in adult education to define it because the goals are so close at hand and can be concretely described. What can be concretely described, are the language situations, but is there a fixed relation between linguistic contents and language situations? That is one set of problems to study.

There is no necessary relation between the various dimensions of language. One can combine a low level of pronunciation with a high level of vocabulary and grammar and still be communicating satisfactorily. One and the same message can be transmitted with subordinates and subjunctives, or with only main clauses of the simplest kind.

If you construct language units for a credit system will you for ever fail a student and not let him pass on to the next unit just because his pronunciation is bad? This point is essential for adults learning languages. We need to know more about the relation between the linguistic components and the message and that can only be reached by pragmatic studies on human verbal communication.

4. But why all this talk about linguistic contents? Well, it is the fundament for everything: the teaching, the media, the evaluation, the teacher training.

Concerning the evaluation, I shall just take up one essential aspect: validity. Adults often know the objectives of their studies; if the syllabus has no validity, that is to say, is not relevant to their future activities, they will protest. In evaluation, simulated language situations and "performance" is life-like, has validity; but it is a rather subjective procedure and this is inherent in language communication: in a natural language situation you have a language partner, another human being, and his judgment is subjective. In order to evaluate a language performance, you need to know how the average language partner reacts, and this leads us back once more to the language situation. People might say: evaluation should be objective; all right, but let us then define objectivity in humanistic terms suitable for the language performance. Better an imperfect instrument which measures what you want to measure than a perfect instrument, for example of the mecanistic type, which

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measures something you do not want to measure! And there are ways of making this kind of evaluation less subjective and more objective: equalisation of procedures and principles of grading, which all requires a special training of the evaluators.

To conclude: base the definition of linguistic contents on pragmatic studies of language communication and language situations; base evaluation on the same definition, giving priority to validity, and developing humanistic definitions of objectivity.

The Council of Europe and the authorities or bodies who have backed up this European Symposium will be very interested in activities which will follow up this meeting. Such activities could be organised by government bodies and/or non-governmental associations; it is to be hoped that through this meeting and other relevant activities the gap between deliberating groups and implementation groups will become smaller and that the conclusions and recommendations in one form or the other will be followed up.

B. The unit/credit system - by Bertrand Schwartz, Counsellor for Permanent Education, Ministry of Education (France)

1. What is it?

1.1 The idea of the unit/credit system is derived from the American system of "credits", which is based on the following:

1.1.1 In opposition to the "all-or-nothing" examination for which the pupil sits once at the end of his course of study and either passes or fails, he takes a number of courses, each worth a certain number of credits, and "passes" or graduates when he has obtained the required number of credits.

1.1.2 The number of credits varies with the type of course and mark obtained (that is, in that single course; for example, a particular maths unit will be worth 3 credits if he has a bare pass, 4 if he has a good pass, and 5 if he passes with distinction. An arts unit, on the other hand, will be worth only 1 or 2 credits).

1.1.3 Each certificate is composed of three categories of units: the first are compulsory, the second consisting of a group of related options - for example, the student must select four units from a total of 12 possibilities - and the third completely optional: he may be required to choose only two or three units from a huge assortment.

As an example, the physics teachers' certificate might be composed of the following: in the first category, units in maths and physics; in the second, a choice of units from a group of subjects such as statistics, chemistry and mechanics; in the third, anything from philosophy to music, art, expression or psychology.

1.1.4 The length of the course in each unit is the same for all pupils (e.g. the maths unit may represent 2 hours a week for one semester).

1.2 This system was devised and developed for the following reasons:

1.2.1 It promotes permanent education in the sense that if a pupil stops after obtaining a certain number of credits he can always start again whenever he likes without losing credits previously earned; he will have "capitalised" on his achievement.

1.2.2 Students can change universities (although American universities are increasingly unwilling to accept credits earned in another university).

1.2.3 The related studies and free options categories give students a wide choice.

1.2.4 To some extent they can plot their own course, which favours independence, from a pedagogical point of view.

1.3 How does the unit/credit system used at BRIEY, for example, compare with the American system?

1.3.1 Students are given no choice, or to be more precise, they must follow a compulsory common stream for the same family of C.A.P (1). Outside that common stream, the only possible choice of units lies in preparing several C.A.Ps, and choosing units which fit into one or another of them. For example, the cutter's C.A.P and the turner's C.A.P have seven units in common, and only one specific to that certificate.

1.3.2 The units have no assigned value, no one is worth more than any other, they carry no point-credits.

1.3.3 The chief difference lies in the time required per unit. As stated above, in the American system all units demand the same length of time for all students, whereas under the Briey system pupils' rates of progress vary and unit length is determined by them, not by the teacher. A credit can be earned after a number of hours determined solely by the speed at which students are capable of progressing.

The purpose of this distinction is to take the capacities of individual pupils and their past experience or lack of it into consideration; but it is more than a pedagogical point and has implications for the syllabus: in order to decide

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(1) Certificat d'aptitude professionnelle.

that a pupil has earned a unit in a period of time which varies from one pupil to the next, it is clearly necessary to have a strict evaluation process, and this is possible only if the aims of the unit have also been strictly defined, in the form we call "to be able to ...".

2. What are the consequences of such a unit/credit system?

We can say that the unit/credit system retains the good points of the American "credits", but without their bad ones.

A system of this type would have effects, however, some direct and some indirect.

2.1 Direct consequences

2.1.1 Obviously, it will help the cause of permanent education by avoiding the "all-or-nothing" pitfall.

2.1.2 It is extremely flexible and reduces strain between the educational system and work, redeployment being facilitated to the extent that the common stream is accepted.

2.1.3 Guidance becomes more effective than in the traditional system (but this also means that teaching staff are assumed to, and indeed must, pay greater heed to guidance). The obvious advantage is a more adaptable and far more "personalised" guidance.

2.1.4 By employing continuous assessment, it avoids the cumbersome system of examinations; but here continuous assessment means what it means, particularly as regards the definition of goals and training of teachers.

2.1.5 By allowing pupils to go at their own speed, it should do away with "repeats". There is no longer any reason why a pupil who has done badly in one unit should "go back to the beginning", and this is a considerable advantage.

2.1.6 It requires a far more personalised teaching, and consequently a radical change in the functions of teaching staff - but one which must be made in the training stage.

2.1.7 One consequence could be an extensive compartmentalisation of syllabuses, unless care is taken to revise them so that each should be inclusive - that is, each syllabus should contain general education, some technical education and some vocational education.

2.2 Indirect consequences

2.2.1 By necessitating some degree of individual "streaming" it leads to more active teaching: every pupil chooses his own courses with the help of his teacher.

2.2.2 It lessens discouragement, and in this respect makes learning more attractive.

2.2.3 It necessitates re-examination of curricula, which now come increasingly to be seen as overloaded, chaotic and largely futile. When aims are expressed strictly in terms of "is able to ...", curriculum reform becomes inevitable.

2.2.4 It takes technological methods for granted, or in any event, is outstandingly well-suited to them, to the extent that they can be readily applied to individual cases, with a corresponding refinement of assessment.

2.2.5 It does away with the very serious drawback of giving different values to different subjects - a drawback for both pupils and, because of the pupils' image of their teachers, for the latter as well. It is extremely harmful, culturally, for some subjects to be more important than others, and here this is no longer the case.

2.2.6 Unless great care is taken, it does entail a danger that fewer pupils will reach the end of their studies. It is not inconceivable that taking pupils' rates of progress into account will slow some of them down. But this raises a very serious problem, that of the recognition by employers of both certificate and credits. An optimist would argue that the system produces pupils, none of whom have failed and all of whom are always "able to do" one thing or another. A pessimist, however, would say employers will be perfectly satisfied to recruit employees who are a few credits short of their certificates, reasoning that they must be worth as much as those who have received it but can be paid less.

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C. A proposed model for critical discussion and study of a possible unit/credit system in modern language learning and teaching for adults in Europe - by R.H. Kingsbury

1. Introduction

1.1 This proposal for a possible unit/credit system in modern language teaching for adults in Europe is the result of considerations of present trends in education and educational systems as expressed in previous Council of Europe conferences, papers and articles published by the Council of Europe, and investigations into and applications of new systems in many spheres of education in Europe. It is also to a large extent the result of discussions held earlier this year at the Eurocentres Head Office in Zürich.

1.2 Aware of the influence of many papers and writings in many fields of education, we would like to acknowledge particularly the following:

(i) The report of the French Language Working Group on "Definition of Language Contents" at the Skepparholmen Symposium (October 1970), which "decided to set forth systematically the linguistic and psycholinguistic parameters making it possible to define, first, a given linguistic situation and, second, the suitable language teaching content", and did so primarily by means of a series of carefully constructed diagrams.

(ii) "An elaborated language-testing model" by Robert L. Cooper, reproduced pp. 57-65 in "Problems in foreign language testing", Special Issue No. 3 of "Language learning; A journal of applied linguistics", August 1968.

(iii) The model of the method for deciding the content in language teaching proposed by Ebbe Lindell in "A system of study materials for the teaching of foreign languages: Principles and examples", reproduced pp. 91-124 in "Didakometry and sociometry", 1969, 1 (2).

1.3 Other proposals for unit/credit schemes - Surrey, open University, Dr. E. von Weizsäcker, French proposals, those by Janne and Schwartz, and indeed many more - must also be acknowledged, as well as those remarks made in papers on other problems which indicate a feeling that future educational systems should employ a unit structure.

2. The primary aims of a unit/credit system

2.1 In essence a unit/credit system is an educational system in which the syllabus, curriculum or body of material (knowledge and skills) to be studied, learned or acquired, is broken down into a number of quantum units of work, each with its own precise definition of the terminal behaviour to be achieved by the learner, all of the units being accompanied by a carefully constructed system of credit ratings.

2.2 In modern language learning within adult, permanent or recurrent education in Europe, the overall aim of the application of a unit/credit system is the improvement of teaching and learning within a commonly recognised framework.

2.3 The design for such a system is to provide the means for better, more effective, more valid and more successful learning within a system which is: (a) flexible enough to allow for the diversity of individual adult needs, a diversity of teaching media and techniques, and a diversity of valid and reliable means of assessment; and (b) flexible enough, too, to allow for future additions and developments - i.e. flexible or elastic enough not to be rendered ineffective or even obsolete with the introduction of new, or as yet unforeseen, elements.

3. Proposed model

3.1 The diagram at page 16 attempts to show a unit/credit system as a framework. It is intended to integrate three main factors: A (the horizontal axis) - accounting for the knowledge and skills/sub-skills in language acquisition; B (the vertical axis) - accounting for a progression of language acquisition through a number of units of study; and C (the depth dimension) - showing the possibility of special units at equivalent levels to allow for individual interest and what Professor Gorosch has called "differentiated options".

(We have taken, in the diagram, the linguistic and extra-linguistic components involved in the four fundamental skills as suggested by the French language working group at Skopparholmen. Like them, too, we have left for discussion, consideration and study of pedagogic parameters until the Rüschlikon Symposium.)

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3.2 Although the diagram has been limited because of space, the system as proposed is "open" in two dimensions:

(i) As it must answer the needs of permanent education (and in particular "recurrent education"), the system allows (on the vertical axis) for an almost limitless number of units, so that the individual learner can build further on the linguistic knowledge and skills he has gained either through previous units in the system or from past learning experience which he brings with him to the system. Whatever the system of credits employed (see 4.1), the learner starting with no knowledge of the language and progressing through the system would acquire credits as his proficiency increases, and the learner who joins the system, having acquired a certain proficiency previously (or elsewhere), could be given an appropriate credit rating at the point at which he enters. (This is why such a system almost automatically demands that, for such learners, there should be for each unit a valid entry diagnostic test.)

(ii) The system is also "open" on the special units dimension (C in the diagram), so that the number of optional or alternative units to cater for individual needs at an equivalent level could in future be as numerous as the demands of society dictate. In the final analysis, it may well be that in language learning, the number of "equivalent" units at one level may depend upon the level of language proficiency (i.e. the higher the level of proficiency, the greater the number of special equivalent units.)

4. Credits, certificates and diplomas

4.1 The proposed model does not attempt to solve the problem of the criteria upon which to decide the weighting of units in terms of credits. The important thing here is that a credit or credits would be given for a unit completed successfully and awarded, as Gorosch suggests, possibly on a pass/fail basis. One of the most difficult problems to be solved (which will require considerable research) will be that of rating units in credit terms.

4.2 Levels of proficiency to be attained will have to be defined for each unit of study. These should be in fairly precise terms. Levels of proficiency for the awarding of certificates and/or diplomas will also need

to be defined, but these will most probably have to be expressed in more global terms, since different learners may have attained different levels of proficiency in the four fundamental language skills as a result of following different courses consisting of different units of study (see also 7). Both certificates and diplomas, therefore, must describe the levels of proficiency in profile form, and they might be awarded on a mixed system of assessment which would include an accumulation of credits together with the results of both a continuous or intermittent assessment scheme and an examination.

5. Contents and media

5.1 A great deal of research will have to go into the defining of the contents of a "foreign language learning unit". Sociolinguistics will have much to contribute here, we feel, since what the units contain in language knowledge and skills to be acquired must answer the needs of society. Whatever the contents of units, they will have to be described in terms of focal points, which may be in purely linguistic terms (syntax, lexis and so on), in social communication situational terms, or in cultural terms - or, which is more probable, we feel, a combination of all. Levels of proficiency to be reached in each of the four fundamental language skills and in the acquisition of cultural and other extra-linguistic features will also have to be defined according to the needs of the learners. Each unit, too, will have to classify or identify the prerequisite elements, a knowledge of which will be necessary to the study of the unit in question. The model (see diagram) suggests that the contents should be defined in terms of linguistic and extra linguistic components, together with other communication codes such as gesture, graphic presentation, and so on. This suggestion in no way eliminates "situational" considerations. If the contents are thought of for the present discussions in terms of focal points, then the system allows for a diversity of approach.

5.2 The media employed within units (or series of units) will be those which best answer the needs of the particular learners for whom the course is designed, and which also therefore correspond to the chosen learning and teaching procedures. Once again, much research is still needed in this area, although we can learn from the experiences of present media systems to date. It is important to stress, however, that the unit/credit system model in no way dictates choice of teaching or learning media - these must be dictated by the particular objectives of the learners and therefore of the contents.

6. Assessment and evaluation

6.1 Whatever the types of assessment employed in units, they should be criterion - rather than norm-referenced; they must give feedback to the learner, to the designers of course-unit materials, and answer the needs of society for certificates and diplomas; and they must further, we feel, be suitable for and acceptable to adult learners, whose attitudes must be taken into account when schemes of assessment are proposed.

6.2 The types of assessment employed - whether continuous/intermittent/cumulative assessment, written tests (notes, letters, etc.), aural/oral telephone communication in the foreign language of a native-language message, a simulated or even truly real foreign language situation test, project (in the foreign language) on some world or European problem (in e.g. ecology, industry politics, etc.) or whatever - must reflect and be appropriate to the objectives, contents, learning/teaching techniques, and the media employed. (See Gorosch's modern language learning system). If the unit/credit system model allows and caters for diversity in units of work through a multiplicity of approach in contents, learning/teaching techniques and media, then it follows that this multiplicity will be reflected in various types of assessment techniques all of which must be shown to be valid and reliable.

6.3 Validity must surely be the prime criterion for types of assessment which are designed first and foremost to give the learner constant feedback on his progress. Validity and reliability will both be of equal importance, however, for the granting of credits, for the purpose of certificates and diplomas, and for the vital process of evaluation of the complete educational cycle, so that assessment continuously "presents data as an instrument to improve instruction". (See Henricson: "Some principles of continuous assessment in education".)

6.4 The unit/credit system model does not prescribe assessment or evaluation procedures. What it does is to provide a framework of units within which a variety of valid techniques can be applied.

6.5 Self-assessment techniques can be applied with little difficulty in other disciplines for the purpose of immediate feedback to the learner (cf. the Open University). Desirable as it may be, how far self-assessment can be employed in the learning of a second language must come under discussion at the Symposium in Rüschlikon.

7. Comparability and equivalence

7.1 Inherent in the very concept of the unit/credit system model is the fact that different learners may reach the same level of proficiency in their language studies by gaining credits through a series of totally different course units. Units of study cannot be regarded as equivalent, since the content of those units will not be identical - one learner, for example, may concentrate on the oral/aural skills with the necessary vocational language for international banking, another on the writing and reading skills with specialist linguistic items necessary for English law. Such units, and series of units, however, must be shown to be comparable, and this comparability must be reflected in the system of credit rating, since "comparable scores represent equal rank in a given population".

7.2 The question of comparability of units within the same general level of language proficiency is not only of importance in the system of credit rating employed, but will naturally be of equal importance in the question of certificates and diplomas - although we should bear in mind once again that profiling of a learner's level of proficiency (see 4.2) will indicate more clearly the degree of comparability.

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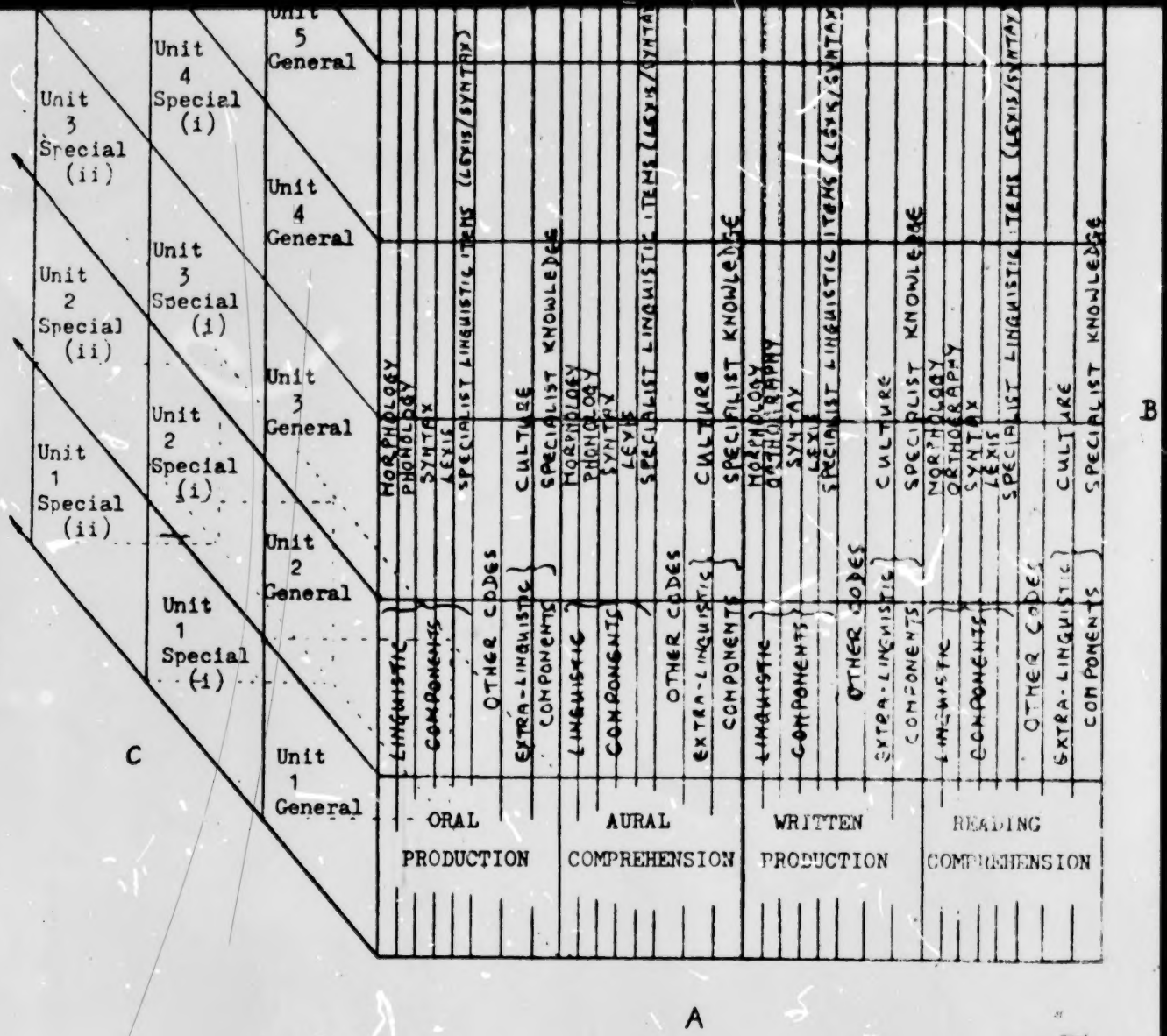

A Proposed Model of a Possible Unit/Credit System in Modern Language Learning and Teaching for Adults in Europe.

C
Unit 1 General
Unit 2 General
Unit 3 General
Unit 4 General
Unit 5 General
Unit 1 Special (i)
Unit 2 Special (i)
Unit 3 Special (i)
Unit 4 Special (i)
Unit 5 Special (i)
Unit 1 Special (ii)
Unit 2 Special (ii)
Unit 3 Special (ii)
Unit 4 Special (ii)
Unit 5 Special (ii)
LINGUISTIC COMPONENTS
MORPHOLOGY
PHONOLOGY
SYNTAX
LEXIS
SPECIALIST LINGUISTIC ITEMS (LEXIS/SYNTAX)
OTHER CODES
EXTRA-LINGUISTIC COMPONENTS
CULTURE
SPECIALIST KNOWLEDGE
LINGUISTIC COMPONENTS
MORPHOLOGY
PHONOLOGY
SYNTAX
LEXIS
SPECIALIST LINGUISTIC ITEMS (LEXIS/SYNTAX)
OTHER CODES
EXTRA-LINGUISTIC COMPONENTS
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SPECIALIST KNOWLEDGE
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SPECIALIST KNOWLEDGE
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III. DIGEST OF CONTRIBUTIONS TO TOPICS

TOPIC 1: NEW FORMS OF ORGANISATION OF THE LINGUISTIC CONTENT

A. The analysis of "language contents" by a European unit/credit system in modern languages, within the framework of continuing post-secondary adult education - by John L.M. Trim

This Symposium is the confluence of two important Council of Europe projects. On the one hand it is one in a series of governmental symposia held to further the effective teaching of modern languages throughout Europe. On the other, it is part of a concerted programme to develop new patterns of continuing and recurrent adult education on a European basis.

Continuing and recurrent post-secondary education is intended to provide a framework of study for students varying widely in their needs, interests, abilities and backgrounds, as well as in the time which other commitments allow them to devote to study at particular times in their lives. The unit/credit scheme is designed to allow for as much flexibility as possible in the order and combination of elements by students, while giving recognition to knowledge and proficiency in a meaningful and reliable way. In order to do so, it breaks the subject-matter of a large global subject down into quanta, which can be studied and examined separately, and then combined in a variety of ways according to the divergent needs of groups of learners. The scheme should make it possible for the assembly of a set of units to qualify for recognition by certificate of Proficiency at various levels, and by diplomas which assure competence in some professional field.

The analysis of subject contents into definable units will have to take into account: (a) any "natural" classification of these contents, or inherent subdivisions; (b) any necessary ordering of knowledge in terms of successive presuppositions; (c) the distinction between any "central core" required by all students and specialised branches from which they may select.

Our task is to consider how best to devise such a unit/credit scheme for modern languages.

We may first distinguish between (a) language proper and (b) associated linguistic and cultural studies.

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As to languages as such, the recognition of successive levels of language efficiency is of course traditional and well established. It has generally not been considered feasible or desirable to give public recognition to more than three or four proficiency grades.

We have to consider whether a unit/credit system should recognise an increased number of proficiency levels, and what is even more important, we have to consider the validity and desirability of such global assessment of overall language proficiency. Theoretically, one might propose to break down global assessment by anatomising the language system itself , teaching and testing phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax and lexicon separately, but to do so seems to be highly artificial. It is nevertheless likely that content definitions for each unit will be formulated at least partially in terms of the formal linguistic knowledge. This will apply particularly where units are arranged in ascending order of proficiency.

A second behavioural basis for the separation of units is afforded by the analysis of communication skills required of any member of a language community and thus of the foreign learner. It is usually considered that there are four language skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing. In fact, however, this classification is not in itself very revealing and fails to capture the centrality of the structures and processes in the central nervous system which underlie them all. This must also be said of the more careful scheme of K. Bung, the delta-diagram. It has the advantage that it shows a rational ordering in terms of what skills are presupposed in the acquisition of others.

Bung's diagram is helpful through the ordering it affords. If gradings are established for various receptive and expressive skills in speech and writing, then entry to a course or examination for a given grade dealing with "later" skill presupposes the achievement of that grade for the "earlier" skills. Since the reverse is not the case, the uneven development of skills may be formally recognised by requiring the achievement of appropriate grades at different stages. Of course, not all activities distinguished in Bung's scheme may be appropriate for separate examination. All skilled language activities are complex, and some logically sequential steps may not represent natural breaks.

A third basis for the separation of units is afforded by the situational approach. This approach is at first sight attractive. The language user participates in a series of linguistic interactions in given situations, in which social relations are established and modified, and in which successive exchanges of utterance bring about desired effects.

We may distinguish micro-situations, in which a particular exchange achieves a particular result, and macro-situations in which linguistic encounters are constructed by a strategy in which micro-linguistic exchanges are elements. Command of a language may be defined in terms of ability to participate effectively in a range of language encounters appropriate to one's social role. User profiles may then be set up, and course and examinations organised around participation in situations, grades being established for each, largely in accordance with the complexity of operations involved.

Narrowly-defined concrete situations (shopping, eating out, reporting, accidents, etc.) are likely to involve a special lexicon and formulaic expressions, which belong to stereotyped aspects of the encounters involved. As these develop, the whole range of language resources at the participant's disposal may be drawn upon. At levels above the elementary, therefore, "situation" must be seen in a more abstract way, e.g. "proposing courses of action", "attacking/defending a point of view", "requesting, giving and accepting object and services", etc.

The analysis of language contents for a unit/credit scheme may thus be envisaged as taking into account: (a) a range of linguistic macro-situations, as types of linguistic encounter, (b) the structure of linguistic encounters in terms of micro-situations, linguistic exchanges graded for complexity, (c) a grading of partially-ordered linguistic skills, in relation to (d) a grading and partial-order of acquisition of underlying linguistic structures and mechanisms.

Such an analysis for each language appears to present a major research undertaking, whilst the integration of these factors is the principal practical problem faced by course writers, teachers and examiners alike. A programme of enquiry developed by H. Marchl and R. Richterich is given in page 25.

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B. The feasibility of a situational organisation of language teaching - by D.A. Wilkins

1. Introduction: Grammatical syllabus and situations method

Whereas the methods and techniques of foreign language teaching have been subject to continual change, the content of learning generally continues to be specified in the same way. In both traditional and modern teaching the aim is seen as being to introduce the learner to the linguistic, especially the grammatical system, step-by-step. An inventory of items to be acquired is set up and organised into a pedagogic sequence. The items are usually indicated by means of grammatical labels, e.g. the definite article, position of adjectives, past tense, conditionals. The sequence is established in the light of a number of factors: experience of teaching, relative frequency of items, degree of generality of rules, a largely intuitive notion of the relative simplicity and complexity of items, and often consideration of mother tongue interference. Whether or not it is apparent, most textbooks have as their basis a grammatical syllabus.

One notion of situation is already well established even in the context of a grammatical syllabus. This is the notion, advocated by Comenius among others and widely practised for many years especially in the teaching of English as a second language, that a new linguistic form should always be presented in association with a distinct situational context which makes the form, whether it be a grammatical or lexical item, meaningful to the learner.

There is no incompatibility between this approach and the use of a grammatical syllabus. Each point of language can be illustrated through a visual context. What we have is a situational approach or situational method. This can be true even where new language appears in a dialogue. In many audio-visual, television and radio courses the language may be associated with something much closer to a natural situation, but as long as the dialogue is created as an illustration of a linguistic structure, we still have the application of a situational method to a grammatical syllabus. Only where the linguistic content is a consequence of prior situational analysis of learning do we have a situational syllabus.

2. Situational syllabus: definition and justification

A situationally organised course or syllabus will be one in which the content of learning units is specified behaviourally rather than linguistically. As we saw above the content of a linguistic syllabus is expressed in a conventional grammatical vocabulary. The behavioural specification will need its own vocabulary. It is common to think of the behavioural content as a set of separate but related situations. In this case situations have to be classified in terms of a meta-language which expresses the significant social dimensions of language use. The behavioural analysis may well start with a broad categorisation of the learner, but then this will have to be broken down into a number of smaller elements, which may form a pedagogic sequence or a number of alternatives. The diversity of linguistic behaviour that the situational meta-language will have to be able to handle is enormous.

In summary, a situational syllabus is one in which the first step is to identify types of language learner, where the typology is based on the purposes for which people are learning the foreign language. The second step involves a detailed behavioural or situational analysis of the anticipated language events in which the learner will participate. The third step is the description of the linguistic content of each of these situations, which in turn is the input to lesson-unit materials. In principle, a different syllabus is needed for each type of learner.

3. Constraints on a purely situational syllabus

3.1 Definition of situation

> "It will be possible to define and analyse the language situations of the post or job he is preparing himself for and thus to define the linguistic contents and, indirectly, ways and means of evaluation." (1)

Whether the linguistic content of learning "language for special purposes" can be derived entirely from an analysis of situations will depend in part on how well we can operate the notion of <u>situation</u>, which has been used so far without definition. To use it in a sense that would account for all of man's language behaviour would be to equate it with total knowledge of the universe. As Richterich and Marchl put it: "The wish to describe a situation

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(1) M. Gorosch.

is basically the wish to describe the world, reality, life itself". Anthropology, ethnology, sociology and psychology should all have their place in a consistent description of situations. Clearly, such a definition is inoperable.

The notion becomes more usable if one limits it to observable features of the physical situation in which language is produced. In this case one will be able to describe not all of man's language behaviour but only certain types in which physical situation plays an important role. The whole of our language behaviour is then seen as a continuuum.

3.2 Macro-situation and micro-situation

Even where we know the general purpose for which a learner is acquiring language (the macro-situation), it does not follow that this overall aim can be segmented into smaller situational units, each of which is in turn behaviourally defined.

3.3 Language as part of the situation

Even in cases where situation is a useful notion, we must bear in mind that language itself always changes the situation. Situations are dynamic, not static. Although the physical situation may remain identical, an item of language may occur which in effect produces a new situation. This will be most apparent in conversation.

3.4 Language and "language-like behaviour"

It is important to define the kind of language ability which a learner wishes to acquire. It is possible to adopt strictly limited aims, whereby what is learned are fixed phrases and sentences which may be particularly useful in certain situations. This can be a legitimate aim and within limits considerable fluency may be attained. Provided that the exact conditions reproduce themselves, the learner will be able to use what he has learned quite effectively. However, it cannot be said that this is true language learning, which aims at the ability to construct sentences as circumstances and intention require, e.g. the development of a competence. The more limited target, depending as it does on memorisation, resembles phrase-book learning and has been called "language-like behaviour" (1). By this means

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(1) B. Spolski: A psychologuistic critique of programmed foreign language instruction. IRAL 4/2 1966.

it is possible to acquire features of performance as responses to clearly-defined stimuli but there is no underlying competence. In most cases this is not likely to be the language learner's aim.

3.5 The differentiation of situational varieties of language

It is too easy to assume that the language required for one situation is quite different from that needed for another or that one variety of language does not share features with another. In fact, the grammatical content of almost all these sub-languages is drawn from the general grammatical system of the language. The difference between them is mostly in the relative frequency and distribution of linguistic forms, not in the presence of unique features.

Special languages using forms quite distinct from the common system, as in religious services, classified advertisements, legal documents, are rare and often of less interest to the foreign language learner.

3.6 Notional and situational choices

Classifying learning content in terms of situations is likely to lead to the omission of certain important choices that a speaker has, but which relate to internal rather than external characteristics. There are significant categories of language use which express the speaker's intention, not the influence of features of the situation. There is no limit to the situations in which one may wish to express wishes, hopes, intentions, obligations, degrees of possibility, probability, necessity, likelihood, doubt, certainty, ability, agreement, disagreement and so on. These are notional labels for communication functions that probably exist in all languages. The realisations of these functions will differ greatly from language to language and the degrees of meaning distinction that can be made are not self-evident to a learner. There must be many situations in which mastery of a range of expression is valuable and where a deficiency in command of these modalities of language is a positive handicap.

4. Conclusion: some implications for a unit/credit system

4.1 A syllabus should be constructed that takes into account both situational and linguistic factors, because:

4.1.1 Every situation shares linguistic features with other situations (3.5).

4.1.2 Some important categories of language use are not derived from the situation (3.6).

4.1.3 Situational categories are not suitable for classifying the needs of all types of language learner (3.1, 3.2).

4.2 It has been proposed that there should be complete transferability between the units. That is to say, a learner could identify his own needs and could follow a sequence of units according to his own choice. This implies that any unit must be able to serve as a starting-point, so that one is never entitled to assume linguistic knowledge gained previously. In the light of the overlapping content of situational varieties and a substantial common core (3.5), this seems an unrealistic condition to impose on the syllabus. It would mean that in every unit the syllabus would have to provide for the learning of the same linguistic forms and this would hardly be an economical (or motivating) procedure once the learner had got beyond his first unit. It seems that some basis must be found for a degree of ordering. Possible units could be grouped into first level choices, second level choices, third level, etc. Alternatively, one might distinguish between those wishing to use the spoken medium and those wishing to use the written.

4.3 Although as far as possible the linguistic content of each lesson-unit will be situationally determined, we must make use of the fact that the same elements of language will be valuable for many other situations. By learning items of language in a particular situational context, a learner may be assured of a satisfactory language performance whenever that situation is reproduced, but at the same time he will be building up his general language competence, so that he is in a position to handle unpredicted language events (3.3, 3.4).

A syllabus must ensure that the linguistic knowledge acquired is generalised beyond the immediate context of learning. If, in a situational dialogue, for example, a new tense occurs, there must be further teaching and practice which enables the learner to master some of the general characteristics of the form and use of the tense. It may not be necessary that every new item of language should be generalised in this way, but if it is not done regularly, the learner will never develop a true language competence.

C. Teaching of modern languages by means of the unit/credit system: outline of a research programme and its various stages - by H. Marchl and R. Richterich

1. Definition of categories of adults needing to learn a modern language. Analysis of specific data for each category and compilation of a detailed classification of any sub-categories.

2. Description of macro-situations (environments) peculiar to each category of adults with a view to identifying their needs.

3. Description of micro-situations (verbal behaviour patterns) peculiar to each sub-category.

4. Collation of data relating to 2 and 3 for the purpose of drawing up a compendium of situations.

5. Extraction from this compendium of a core of situations common to all categories.

6. Identification of linguistic elements (structures and vocabulary) corresponding to each micro-situation.

7. Compilation of a linguistic compendium.

8. Extraction from this compendium of a common core of corresponding linguistic elements.

9. Combination of the common core of situations and that of corresponding linguistic elements with a view to establishing a generalised system.

10. Comparison of this generalised system with communication universals.

Clearly this systemic approach will have to be based on a number of detailed studies. An initial study on point 1 has already been proposed:

"Analytical classification of categories of adults needing to learn a second European language" (see document CCC/EES (71) 55).

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TOPIC 2: TYPES OF EVALUATION WITHIN A UNIT/CREDIT SYSTEM

A. Introductory talk by S.E. Henricson

General background

The main problems in the field of assessment of achievement in modern languages were stated by Prof. Trim and are concerned with the organisation of linguistic contents.

A specific problem of assessment is then to establish criteria for the assessment and testing especially in the field of out-of-school education. Here the criteria have to cover not only the linguistic content in a general sense. Many modern language courses in the out-of-school programme will have very specific goals and objectives and this must be taken into account when building up a programme of assessment,

Another general problem is the fact that the students not only have different goals for their studies of a modern language, but also start at very different levels both as regards the general educational background and the levels of proficiency in the language to be studied.

Types of assessment

As very little is known about the general content of a unit/credit system and still less about the specific content of a specific unit/credit system for modern languages, the best way of action in the field of assessment seems to be to try to use more or less conventional types of assessment until detailed experiences from a unit/credit system are available. Two different general aims of assessment seem to be of importance:

1. Diagnostic testing

   (a) at the beginning of a course to get an idea of the individual student's level of proficiency (if any) and to try to reveal his ability to follow the course(s) intended;

   (b) during the course, integrated into the teaching process as a means to ensure maximal progress and as a part of the individual planning of the studies. This planning pertains both to the individual students and his studies and also to the organisation of the unit/credit system.

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2. Achievement testing

(a) as a part of the diagnostic assessment during a course and placed at the end of a specific unit;

(b) a final test of achievement for a block of units forming a specific course.

As can be seen from above the diagnostic and achievement testing to some extent cover the same aims. It means that the same test and methods might be used, but for different reasons. This should be kept in mind when it comes to discussing testing techniques and test methods. It is sometimes argued that tests for diagnosis and for achievement must be of different types but the difference between diagnosis and final testing to some extent depends on what use one is going to make of the test results.

From another point of view one might look upon assessment as a continuous process or as something which takes place only at the end of a given study course, to which one may or may not add one or a few tests during the course. In most cases the latter model seems to be abandoned for the continuous model.

Continuous assessment seems to be the only way to cover the aims of assessment, discussed above. If one wishes to give both the teacher and the pupil a detailed feedback of the studies one has to organise the assessment as a continuous procedure. This is of special importance as far as unit/credit system is concerned and especially when building up such a system.

Testing techniques

As already mentioned the testing techniques to be used in a unit/credit system must, at least for the near future, be conventional. There is a need for research and development of new techniques wish special reference to teaching in a unit/credit system. In fact the need for development of new testing techniques is a general one in the whole field of language testing.

On the other hand the organisation of a unit/credit system will give a clearer basis for the construction of test devices. In such a system one has to go into details in the definition of content and this will open new ways for the testing techniques. In this connection there are some questions to be looked into. Most of the testing in the field of modern languages up till now seems to show that there are quite high correlations between different language skills.

This fact might be explained in two different ways. On the one hand it can be caused by poor test instruments and especially by the fact that very little has been done along the lines pointed out in Prof. Trim's paper. Further work to define the content of the study of a modern language might help the test makers to develop more specific tests and this might decrease the correlations between different parts of the content.

On the other hand the result might be that there still are high correlations between the different factors involved. One then has to conclude that the mastery of language is a comprehensive skill and testing one part of the skill might to a certain extent substitute for other parts. Even if this should be true, the answers to these questions, will be of great importance to the development of testing in modern languages teaching.

Research in this area is closely connected with the development of a unit/credit system. It might be shown that the correlation between various language skills differ according to (a) level of achievement and (b) level of age of the students, only to mention two factors to be taken into account.

These general problems underline the close connection between on the one hand the content and aims of language teaching and on the other hand the content and techniques of modern language testing. The building up of a unit/credit system therefore is a double challenge to teachers of modern languages and to test makers. Underlining the close connection between the construction of a unit/credit system and test techniques is at the same time a kind of warning not to overemphasise the technical side of the assessment procedure. Sometimes too much interest is given to different computer systems and other technical aids without paying enough attention to "what is to be measured".

B. Evaluation of results and definition of objectives - by Bertrand Schwartz

1. Evaluation of results

Students' results are generally assessed by means of tests and examinations.

These methods are frequently criticised nowadays, and I would like here to clarify the problem and suggest a few solutions.

1.1 Firstly, what is the purpose of assessing results?

There are three objectives:

- to provide the outside world with evidence of students' capabilities in the form of leaving certificates;
- to enable the student to know how he stands in relation to others and what progress he has made;
- to enable the teacher to judge the efficacy of his teaching.

But it is obviously impossible to deal with three problems and attempt to achieve three objectives by one and the same method, and it must be admitted that in most cases only objective No. 1 is taken into account.

1.2 The question then arises of how the other two are to be achieved

Before we even ask this question we should consider whether examinations and tests are really efficient methods of providing the outside world with proof of students' capabilities.

1.3 Criticisms of the traditional system

In my view, tests and examinations have many drawbacks, but one of these seems to me particularly important:

They take only knowledge into account

We must therefore question the traditional methods and endeavour to base proof of capabilities on something besides memory and the assimilation of knowledge.

However, we are then immediately faced with the problem of what is to be judged and therefore with a problem which, although generally relegated to the second place or even totally ignored, becomes the first question to arise in connection with any educational operation:

What are the students going to be prepared for?

The foregoing points to an important function for the teacher, namely to a balance between his objectives and the methods he has to employ both for educating and for assessing the results. If there is not a balance, if there is a serious discrepancy, this means in practice that the teacher has set himself unattainable objectives, that he has employed bad methods or that the students have been unable or unwilling to achieve them.

1.4 Assumptions regarding methods of evaluation

We have just seen that the aims of education must be defined clearly and more in terms of "capabilities" than in terms of a catalogue of knowledge, and the teacher must take the educational course of formulating his objectives in such a form.

If that is done, we shall see that one method may often satisfy all three objectives of providing evidence for the outside world, of being educationally useful to the students and of enabling the master to appraise his own teaching.

As regards the first, this means that the objectives, if now defined with and by the "outside world", must in all instances be publicised and well known to everyone, i.e. there must be accurate information about them.

It is sufficient for students to understand the aims of teaching in order to use the assessment of results for their own advancement, and this means that a large part of education must be devoted to discussing objectives. I would even go further, I think there must be some measure of consultation, i.e. the teacher must give consideration to the students' aspirations and expectations. Otherwise, he must expect the students not to understand what he is doing and why he is doing it because they have not properly understood the objectives, and in that case they will not only fail to derive full benefit from the teaching but in some cases will reject it altogether.

We can immediately guess the innumerable reactions caused by such an assumption; in what respect should the students have a say in the matter and give their opinions? They cannot know what they have to learn before they have learnt it. This is indeed correct, on the face of it, students cannot know in advance the importance of this or that subject-matter, but this does not alter the fact - as is shown by experience - that it is perfectly feasible and desirable to have continuous discussions with them about the reasons for learning these subjects because then - but only then - will the evaluation of results fulfil an essential educational function as the students themselves realise the discrepancy between the results expected and the results obtained.

As regards the third objective, this becomes easy to achieve and it may even be assumed that the teacher, by constantly analysing the gap between his targets and what he achieves, will modify them and that the students will then be better able to understand the reasons both for what they are doing and for the methods employed in learning.

2. Definition of objectives

2.1 Coherence between objectives and methods

In all that has gone before we have stressed the importance of the definition of objectives. In particular we have shown that both in the evaluation of results (if this is to constitute valid evidence for the outside world) for the effectiveness of teaching it was necessary for the objectives to be discussed and understood both by the outside world and by the students, thus in the first place to be properly defined.

In practice, the definition is always the result of more or less implicit "compromises" between the general aims of the "national educational political will" and those of the educational institution and teachers or even of the students and the outside world.

2.2 Assumptions regarding the definition of objectives

In what we have said we wished to emphasise that, in the absence of constant, thorough reflection about the objectives and the appropriate means to be used, it is difficult to go further than the single objective of imparting knowledge arranged in syllabuses, particularly as we are very strongly impelled in this direction by the traditional cultural model: for is it not our unconscious aim to train students in our own image, students who conform to the traditional idea of a "cultivated man"?

In this connection the idea of a syllabus appears to us to be meaningless, and we must make it clear what we want to do. Syllabuses will, in fact, vary with the objective in view. In order to clarify this point we shall quote here four types of objectives because they seem to us to be of a general nature and we shall immediately illustrate them by examples so as to be practical.

As our first example we shall take that of a scientific subject, statistics. Teaching may be limited:

- to information, by showing that the functional mathematical law is very rare in nature, that the indeterminate phenomenon is the general phenomenon and that there are statistical methods for analysing problems;

- to the "statistical mode of expression", which means giving the students practice in stating their problems, presenting their data in a probabilist, statistical manner, understanding the results of a specialised study;

- to the statistical tool, by instruction in handling the techniques of calculation used in statistics, preparing and implementing experimental plans, analysing them and calculating the degree of uncertainty in a result;

- to methodological training, by instructing the students in the method of approach to problems complicated by multiple factors, the use of experimentation, the operation of testing a hypothesis and proceeding by induction.

In applying a division of this kind to the teaching of natural sciences, for example, we see how radically this subject could be transformed in secondary education. What pupils have to learn now would probably be rearranged in the following way: one part of it would be entirely eliminated, namely that which a normally constituted mind can retain for no more than a fortnight; another part would be restricted to information only, a third part would consist in an introduction to the basic vocabulary (expression) whereby the phenomena and facts of the subject could be defined and described; a fourth part, the tool, would be taught to a limited number of students only, forming the options among which they would be distributed. An even more limited field would be the optimum framework for starting a larger or smaller proportion of the students on methods of observation and the manipulation of facilities.

TOPIC 3: MEANS OF IMPLEMENTATION OF A UNIT/CREDIT SYSTEM IN THE TEACHING/LEARNING OF MODERN LANGUAGES IN ADULT EDUCATION

Comments on the reports of MM. Kingsbury, Schwartz, Trim - by Y. Chalon

1. The main problem is still that of teaching objectives: to me it seems that to define these is the first step towards outlining a solution.

2. Is it possible to pick out a "model" for a unit/credit scheme without at the same time selecting a learning model?

3. Should a distinction not be made between:

"UNITS" - "Sets" of learning material,

- making it possible to classify the learner at a specific level and fit him into a given stage of learning,
- definable according to educational criteria by reference to a learning situation, method, or specific rate of progress.

"CREDITS" - depending upon vocational criteria having some value on the labour market, for example.

3.1 Is it possible in these two cases to have:

- the same methods of evaluation,
- the same reference criteria,
- the same examiners,
- evaluation of the same contents, skills and performances?

3.2 One might, for example, envisage evaluation:

. with regard to "UNITS" ("diagnosis", "achievement" or "testing" models) { As evaluation by the teachers (possibly self-evaluation) of the individual's level of language knowledge (profile of knowledge by reference to method, content, learning objectives, etc.)

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. by means of "CREDITS" ("classification" or "testing" model)	As the classification by independent examiners (or future employers?) of an individual in a society by reference to "tasks" to be performed.
Final evaluation	

4. The problem of a credit system allowing for an accumulation of "points" envisaged as a problem of "communication of information". (Cf. P. Shaeffer: "Qui dit Quoi à Qui, Comment et avec Quels effets?".)

4.1 What information is to be communicated?

- learning time, performance, skill acquired, etc., any gaps, curriculum covered;
- what additional secondary information is to be included: e.g. on the mother tongue, the subject studied, etc.;
- in any event, one problem remains untouched: How is this information to be selected?

4.2 Who is to select the information? (Rather than: Who is to communicate it?)

- the teacher (successive teachers) with or without help from the learner;
- independent examiners;
- "users" (employers).

4.3 To whom is the information to be communicated?

- to the learner;
- to other teachers;
- to a central authority (the State; e.g. for entry in a card-index);
- to the employer who may be looking for someone with specific qualifications.

4.4 How is the information to be communicated?

- one overall (average) mark;
- a number of different marks (profile);
- personal assessment(s).

4.5 To what effect?

- Employment:
  - . of somebody able to take on a particular job immediately,
  - . of somebody thought capable of adjusting at a later stage;
- Grading;
- Transfer to a new "platform" of learning;
- Enter, at a given level, into a new system of teaching;
- (Re)orientation, e.g. to a refresher course.

4.6 The answers to all the other questions will depend on those given to each of the above.

5. Problems peculiar to modern languages:

5.1 In modern languages, perhaps more than in any other subject, a "capital" of knowledge may:

- dwindle away: cf. sport - an athletic achievement at 18 years of age is not of much value at 30;
- yield interest: in particular without further tuition, e.g. by residence in a foreign country.

5.2 From this point of view a distinction should perhaps be made between:

- "permanent education": Information kept up-to-date regarding changes in the learner's behaviour and how his learning progresses.
- "recurrent education": Need for fresh initial evaluation each time he re-enters the educational system.

5.3 Possibility of dividing learning into "UNIT/CREDITS":

- Vertically: Is grading possible? (This question should be asked in regard to each of Trim's broad divisions: language, skills, situations.)

- Horizontally: Can "units" be learnt separately from one another or should there not be simultaneous learning (and control) of several of them (which?)?

(This question must be considered both: (a) as regards each of Trim's broad divisions; (b) as regards the three aspects combined; e.g. can one envisage an approach to language that ignores skills and/or the situation?)

5.4 Comments on Trim's report:

. Can/must the three approaches be combined?

. Each one is possible:

- linguistic approach: cf. conventional teaching;
- approach through skills: cf. McCarthy: Preliminary auditory training;
- approach through situations: cf. "Enfant en Angleterre", cf. BLANC at Birkbeck.

. Is not the only answer to be found in:

- giving priority to one of the three (according to the external criteria of age, motivation, previous learning habits, country of mother tongue or of foreign language);
- making the other two subsidiary;
- the main criterion still being that of long-term objectives.

. Control and evaluation will depend on the answers given to paragraph 4.

It will thus be possible to have a number of controls combining the three approaches but not one single control.

5.5 Consideration of learning factors other than language/skills/situation:

- mother tongue;
- motivation: changeable factor that may vary with time.

5.6 Definition of objectives in operational terms:

- cf. Schwartz: "to be capable of ...";

- possibly add the idea of "has been capable of ..."; preparation of a "linguistic curriculum vitae": travel to foreign countries, work involving the use of a foreign language?

5.7 The solution (if there is one) will probably have to be found in a spread of items of information.

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IV. CONCLUSIONS

I. New forms of organisation of linguistic content

1. The organisation of the content of a language learning system for adults must result from the analysis of the acts of language communication in which they are to participate. Any description of language contents must take into consideration language systems, language skills and language situations.

2. It was felt that in all these respects successive competence levels should be established and that at each level it was possible to distinguish between a common core required by all users and specialised components, which would be characterised primarily by a specialised vocabulary and formulaic expressions and by the special application of language knowledge and skills to the distinctive situations of the specialised field.

3. Linguistic science is at present better able to undertake grammatical than situational analysis and to establish a hierarchical order of the elements of a language system on a logico-developmental basis. It was agreed, however, that too little was at present known about the process of second language learning for it to be possible to tell whether such an ordering corresponded to the realities of adult language learning and use. The place of grammatical grading should therefore be the subject of further research.

4. A hierarchy of levels of increasing competence should be recognised for each situation. Simple direct question and answer at a basic level would correspond at higher levels to a greater subtlety in personal interaction and the establishment of social relations.

5. User profiles might be established for classes of adult learners in terms of special knowledge and differentially developed skills required. It was pointed out, however, that too little was at present known about the transfer of knowledge and skills for such profiles to be used with complete confidence.

6. It was also recognised that mastery of a certain number of situations would be largely transferred to other situations with common features, e.g. a buying and selling situation would involve the use of structures which could be used in many situations involving question and answer, preferences, orders, etc.

7. It was considered that further research into situational structure was required and that the analysis of situations in terms of persons, purposes, setting and matter would be useful in order to establish a typology of common generalised language situations within a socio-cultural framework.

8. The general design of a language contents model was considered and there was general agreement that some cylindrical form would be appropriate, with a central core representing the development of a general language competence through different levels, and with specialised components radiating from this core at each level with a certain amount of overlap between contiguous specialisms.

9. The problems of comparability involved in establishing content specifications for different competence levels on a pan-European basis were discussed, particularly the diverse language learning situations arising in different countries from different interference problems and the widely varying socio-linguistic status of foreign languages. It was considered, however, that these differences could be accommodated within a single overall structure, given flexibility and freedom of choice. In particular the system should make possible a range of entry points according to the previous experience and needs of learners. Indeed, this flexibility and freedom of choice would not only do justice to the widely varying needs of adult learners, but also provide a model for the introduction of greater flexibility into language learning in schools and universities, where learner-centred motivation-based language study is less-developed.

10. It was recognised that a viable unit/credit system had still to be established. It was unclear what the optimal size of language units would be. A large number would allow greater flexibility in making combinations and eliminate the problem of comparability. On the other hand, as a result of the highly integrated nature of language, too finely differentiated units might lead to excessive redundancy. A considerable programme of research and development would be necessary, firstly to provide an adequate specification of language content for each individual language and then for the development of language units, at first on a restricted experimental scale.

11. Research

Participants recommended that the research and development programme envisaged above should pay particular attention to the following:

(a) A statistical survey of existing patterns of adult language study in Europe with a view to establishing the major categories of adult language learners and their needs, both now and in the foreseeable future.

(b) The structure and typological classification of situations.

(c) The fundamental psychological processes of adult foreign language acquisition with particular reference to the transfer of skills and the relevance of grammatical grading.

(d) That various centres carry out experimental research on the comparative efficiency of the various forms of organisation of linguistic content and on the use of different media.

II. Types of evaluation within a unit/credit system

Objectives of evaluation

It was emphasised that evaluation should serve as a means of collecting data,

(a) to provide a basis for a better understanding of the educational process;

(b) to enable the student to adopt an appropriate course of study;

(c) to provide information to bodies outside the educational system.

It was suggested that in a fully applied system of permanent education there would be several good reasons for emphasising self-administered evaluation. In the field of modern language learning, however, a combination of methods would be necessary and the concept of guided self-assessment might be more appropriate.

When applying these three objectives in a unit/credit system a further useful distinction may be made as follows:

(a) feedback to the student on his performance, which should so far as possible be continuous and self-administered;

(b) feedback to an institution and to students on the success of a specific unit, which should be locally administered; and

(c) recognition of a student's achievement by the award of certificates and diplomas, which should be so organised as to ensure comparability on a European scale.

In applying a unit/credit system evaluation is a most useful tool in gathering data to facilitate change in the system especially during the introductory period.

It was felt strongly that the student should be given a greater responsibility for determining the pace of his own learning and should be involved wherever possible in the process of evaluation.

The question of the necessity for diplomas and certificates was discussed in the light of the needs of different groups of adult students and the requirements of industry, commerce, etc. The decision on the nature of and necessity for such diplomas was considered of secondary importance compared to the construction and application of a unit/credit system in adult education. For the same reasons no specific suggestions were made at this time as to how credits should be distributed within a unit/credit system.

Methods of evaluation

It was agreed that considerable importance should be attached to initial diagnosis. The main objective of this evaluation would then be to help the student to overcome his difficulties in going from one unit to another and from one step to another within a unit. Such diagnostic procedures would also help the student to choose the path most appropriate to him.

There would also be a need for the assessment of achievement at the end of each unit.

As the mastery of a foreign language, even at a fairly low level, is too complex a matter for evaluation to be based only on objective techniques, both objective and subjective assessment must be employed.

The recommended diagnostic evaluation and the guided self-assessment procedures will form a system of continuous evaluation. The student should be informed of the nature of this continuous evaluation. This may help him to overcome the psychological stress of assessment.

To ensure effective feedback between teaching-learning-testing teachers and students must be involved in the evaluation process. Thus a prominent place should be devoted to problems of evaluation in teacher training. Practising

teachers should be helped to arrive at relevant evaluation by supplying them with techniques and methods of assessment, e.g. teachers might be given access to item banks including not only objective test items of the multiple choice type but other kinds of assessment techniques.

While there can be no question of attempting to develop a single language-teaching methodology on a European scale, when the content of a credit/unit system is established, the preparation of teaching material and the use of teaching aids and methods of evaluation are to be seen together as a whole.

The construction of a system for evaluation should be closely integrated with the building up of a credit/unit system and be based on the content of the units. In the development project leading to a unit/credit system it will be an important part of the work to develop the specific type and content of evaluation to be used within that system.

Research

It was recommended that research should be conducted in the following areas:

1. Techniques for guided self-assessment.

2. Comparability of units.

3. Forms of assessment appropriate for a unit/credit system.

4. A framework of assessment which might be adopted by all countries using the unit/credit system.

5. Ways of ensuring that the achievement measured by a unit/credit system should correspond closely to proficiency in the language.

III. Means of implementation of a unit/credit system in the teaching/learning of modern languages in adult education

1. It was suggested that the viability of a unit/credit system depended on the findings of a feasibility study. A balance had to be struck between the desire for a highly flexible learner-centred motivation-based system of adult education on the one hand and the conditions obtaining in the reality of the adult learner's situation.

2. Further research was required into the needs of various types of adult learners and might inter alia be conducted on:

(a) those pursuing education for their own personal satisfaction;

(b) those with little formal education in their own language;

(c) those who will benefit professionally or vocationally from such studies.

It was emphasised that the various needs explored would vary greatly in some cases from one national context to another. For this reason, enquiries into this field should be conducted both on a European and a national basis.

3. It was suggested that further studies should be conducted in the following fields:

(a) the investigation of the character of units and sub-units in a unit/credit system;

(b) the nature and function of evaluation within the unit/credit system;

(c) the relatability of sets of units in a unit/credit system to form groups marking levels of proficiency at particular points along a scale of achievement;

(d) an enquiry into the possibility of encouraging the learning of lesser-known languages through pooled resources and the use of a multi-media approach;

(e) ways of ensuring that an efficient interchange of information and experiences is established between bodies concerned with adult education, with a view to contributing towards the setting up of a central agency for the provision of resources.

4. The development of a theoretical framework in a unit/credit system demands the early operation of a number of pilot schemes. Such schemes would tend to reflect the priorities in adult education in national contexts.

5. The training of teachers specialising in language teaching to adults should include an awareness of the mechanisms of the mother tongue and should aim at the development of new learning strategies and those of evaluation.

6. A unit/credit system on the envisaged scale can only be implemented by making use of educational technology. The wide coverage afforded by media systems will make for increased cost-effectiveness.

APPENDIX I
ANNEXE I

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS
LISTE DES PARTICIPANTS

Delegates of the Council of Europe member States
Délégués des États membres du Conseil de l'Europe

AUSTRIA
AUTRICHE

Universitätsdozent
Dr. Richard OLECHOWSKI
Pädagogisches Institut
der Universität Wien
Meidlinger Hauptstr. 5/1/44
A-1120 Wien

BELGIUM
BELGIQUE

M. ANDRIES
Vlaamse Televisie
13, av. Maurice Maeterlinck
B-1030 Bruxelles

Mlle. Gh. DE BIEVRE
Ministère de l'Education Nationale
Administration des Etudes
Cité Administrative - Quartier Arcades
B-1010 Bruxelles

Prof. R. HOTTERBEEX
Département de Linguistique
Ecole d'Interprètes Internationaux
Centre Univisitaire de Mons
17 Place Warocqué
B-7000 Mons

M. VAN PASSEL
Koninklijke Militaire School
Av. de Cortenbergh
B-1040 Bruxelles

CYPRUS
CHYPRE

M. Leonidas KOULLIS
Inspector of Foreign Languages
Ministry of Education
CY-Nicosia

./.

Appendix I

DENMARK
DANEMARK

Mr. Flemming Palle HANSEN
Senior Teacher
Upper Secondary School
Folkeligt Oplysningsforbund
Palaegade 5
DK-1261 Copenhagen K

M. Aage SALLING
Senior Teacher
Upper Secondary School
Praestejorden 16
DK-2850 Naerum

SPAIN
ESPAGNE

Mr. José-Fidel RODRIGUEZ ALARCON
Delgade Serrano, No. 1
E-Ceuta

FINLAND
FINLANDE

Mr. Antti AIRAMO
Deputy Vice-Headmaster
Workers' Institute in Turku
Vähä-Hämeenkatu 5.C.43
SF-Turku

Mrs. Rauha PETRO
Chief Inspector
National Board of Schools
Kouluhallitus
Et. Espl.katu 16
SF-Helsinki

FRANCE

M. Henri ADAMCEWSKY
Professeur
Université de Paris III
17, rue de la Sorbonne
F-75 Paris 5e

Prof. Henry BONNEVILLE
Président de l'Université Grenoble III
Université
F-38 Grenoble

GREECE
GRECE

M. Gabriel ALPENTZOS
Enseignant
5, rue Aghiou Fanouriou
GR-Athènes 506

M. Antonios GAÏTANIS
Enseignant
2, rue Limnou
Korydallos
GR-Le Pirée

Appendix I

IRELAND IRLANDE	Mr. Tomàs O'DOMHNALLÁIN Department of Education IR-Dublin 1
	Miss K. TIERNEY Department of Education IR-Dublin 1
ICELAND ISLANDE	Mr. Gudny GUDMUNDSSON Principal of Reykjavik Grammar School IS-Reykjavik
ITALY ITALIE	Mme. Franca DE ANGELIS Professeur de Français Via Fiume, 28 I-57100-Livorno
	M. Antonio ANTONICA Professeur Istituto Tecnico Commerciale I-Torre del Greco/Napoli
	M. Pasquale JANNINI Professeur Facoltá Magistero Universitá I-Roma
LUXEMBOURG	M. Joseph MULLER Inspecteur de l'Enseignement primaire 2, rue de la Libération L-Strassen
MALTA MALTE	not represented non représentée
NORWAY NORVEGE	Mr. Ninian MILLAR, MA Head of English Department Studentersamfundet Friundervisning Bogstadvejen 8 N-Oslo
	Mr. Rolf LYSTAD Royal Ministry of Foreign Affairs N-Oslo

Appendix I

NETHERLANDS PAYS-BAS	Drs. L.P. van den BERK Head "Centrum Berkenhove" Utrechtseweg 2 NL-De Blit
	Dr. J.A. van EK Director Institute for Applied Linguistics University of Utrecht NL-Utrecht
FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY REPUBLIQUE FEDERALE D'ALLEMAGNE	Mr. Herbert LINGSCH Oberstudienrat Institut für Film und Bild in Wissenschaft und Kunst Museuminsel 1 D-8 München 22
	Mr. Robert NOWACEK Bundesprüfungsbeauftragter für Fremdsprachenzertifikate Deutscher Volkshochschulverband eV Hirschzeller Str. 16 D-895 Kaufbeuren
UNITED KINGDOM ROYAUME-UNI	Mr. J. HOWGEGO, HMI "Longridge" 36 Erskine Road GB-Gullane/East Lothian/Scotland
	Mr. R.F. MILDON, HMI 3 Fairway Off Warner Road GB-Ware, Herts.
	Professor David WILKINS Department of Linguistics University of Reading GB-Reading, Berks.
HOLY SEE SAINT-SIEGE	M. Robert MARCLAY Professeur "La Davonnaise" Avenue du Léman CH-1025 Saint-Sulpice
SWEDEN SUEDE	Mr. Peter HAMMARBERG Recteur Kursverksamheten vid Stockholms Universitet Box 5507 S-114 85 Stockholm

Appendix I

SWITZERLAND
SUISSE

M. Jean-Blaise OPPEL
Directeur
Eurocentre Neuchâtel
11, rue de l'Hôpital
CH-2000 Neuchâtel

Prof. Eddy ROULET
Directeur, Centre de Linguistique Appliquée
Université de Neuchâtel
8, Rue du Port-Roulant
CH-2000 Neuchâtel

TURKEY
TURQUIE

Mr. Muhittin EROL
Rapporteur du Conseil Supérieur de l'Education
Ministère de l'Education Nationale
Milli Egitim Bakanligi
Talim ve Tarbiye Dairesi
TR-Ankara

Experts

Prof. Yves CHALON
Directeur du Centre de Recherches et d'Applications pédagogiques en langues (CRAPEL)
Université de Nancy II
BP 3397
F-54 Nancy-Désilles

Prof. Dr. John E. DIETRICH
Assistant Provost
Michigan State University
USA-East Lansing/Michigan 48823

Prof. asst. Dr. Theodor EBNETER
Directeur du laboratoire de langues
Université de Zürich
Hirschengraben 82
CH-8001 Zürich

Prof. Dr. Max GOROSCH
Language Institute
School of Economics
Howitzvej 60
DK-2000 København F

Prof. Dr. Sven E. HENRICSON
Head of Division
National Board of Education
Fack
S-11353 Stockholm

./.

Appendix I

Mr. Roy H. KINGSBURY, BA
Research and Development Department
Eurocentre Bournemouth
26 Dean Park Road
GB-Bournemouth, BH1 IHZ

M. Herbert MARCHL
Directeur
Télévision scolaire
Bayerischer Rundfunk
Postfach
D-8 München 2

Mr. Robert NOWACEK
(see: Delegates Fed. Rep. of Germany
voir: Délégués de l Rép. Féd. d'Allemagne)

Mr. W.E. PRESCOTT, BA
Lecturer,
Institute of Educational Technology
Open University
POB 48
GB-Bletchley, Bucks.

M. René RICHTERICH, Lic. Litt.
Service de Recherche et d'Application
Eurocentre Neuchâtel
11, rue de l'Hôpital
CH-2000 Neuchâtel

Prof. Dr. John L.M. TRIM
Director, Department of Linguistics
Faculty of Modern and Medieval Languages
University of Cambridge
Sidgwick Avenue
GB-Cambridge/CB39DA

M. Erh. J.C. WAESPI
Directeur des Eurocentres
Seestrasse 247
CH-8038 Zürich

Representation of the host country
Représentation du pays hôte

M. Wilfried MARTEL
Secrétaire Général
du Département Fédéral de l'Intérieur
Chef de la Division des Affaires culturelles
Inselgasse
CH-3003 Bern

M. Gérard M. SCHUWEY
Collaborateur scientifique
à la Division des Affaires culturelles
Département Fédéral de l'Intérieur
Inselgasse
CH-3000 Bern

./.

Appendix I

Council of Europe Conseil de l'Europe	Dr. Herbert JOCHER Adjoint au Chef de la Division de l'Education extrascolaire et du Développement culturel Conseil de l'Europe F-67 Strasbourg
	Mlle Antionetta DE VIGILI Administrateur Division de l'Education extrascolaire et du Développement culturel Conseil de l'Europe, F-67 Strasbourg
Organisation of the Symposium Organisation du Symposium	Dr. Gérard BODEMER Chef du Service pédagogique des Eurocentres Seestrasse 247 CH-8038 Zürich
Observers Observateurs	Mr. Heinrich MICHAELSEN Oberstudienrat D-454 Lengerich
	Mr. Harold S. OTTER, MA Secretary, Joint Committee University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate and the British Council for the Cambridge Examinations in English 17 Harvey Road GB-Cambridge CB1 2EU
	M. F.G. PEYRACHON Directeur, Eurocentre Lausanne 12, Passage Saint-François CH-1000 Lausanne
	Prof. Ernst STAEHLIN Président Ostschweizerische Maturitätsschule für Erwachsene Othmar-Shoeck-Strasse 8 CH-9008 St. Gallen
	Miss Paula KAHN, BA Publisher, Longman Group Ltd. Longman House Burnt Mill GB-Harlow/Essex
	Mr. Roland HINDMARSH English Language Officer The British Council 65 Davis Street GB-London WIY ZAA

A P P E N D I X II

TOWARDS A SITUATIONAL DEFINITION OF LANGUAGE CONTENTS IN FOREIGN LANGUAGES, by John L.M. TRIM

A schematic inventory of language roles, activities and uses

1. USER ROLES

(a) Foreign language as primary professional qualification

Interpreter (i) consecutive
(ii) simultaneous

Translator (i) general
(ii) commercial
(iii) technical
(iv) scientific
(v) literary

Monitoring of foreign broadcasting.
Courier
Guide
Multilingual secretary/receptionist (i.e. reception of visitors and conduct of business in foreign language, multilingual shorthand and typing).
Information retrieval and abstracting.
Language teaching.
Immigration officials.

(b) Foreign language as ancillary professional qualification

Diplomacy (i) embassy
(ii) consular, international organisations

Import-export commercial relations (sales and marketing).
Following international developments in science, technology, arts, politics and economics, especially in own field of professional responsibility.
Press reporting of international news
Secretarial duties including limited use of foreign language (e.g. formal greeting of visitors and answering routine enquiries, translation of foreign language letters received, copy-typing of letters in FL).
Librarianship (accessioning of foreign language items, reading of catalogues, ordering).
Dealing with foreigners as part of a general public.

(c) Personal motivation.

Social
(i) to live in the country
(ii) to develop close relations with natives
(iii) for touristic visits
(iv) pen-friendships
(v) reading of foreign newspapers and magazines
(vi) reading of contemporary literature
(vii) understanding of foreign films, plays, radio and T.V. broadcasts
(viii) study of a foreign literary culture, including its classical heritage

2. LANGUAGE ACTIVITIES

(a) Speech.

(i) reading aloud of a text after preparation (presupposes identification of text as reader and, usually, reconstitution of an appropriate prosodic pattern).

(ii) reading aloud of a text at sight

(iii) rehearsed speech (lieder, opera, drama, poetry, formal speeches learnt off by heart)

(iv) appropriate use of formulaic responses

(v) delivery of speech from notes after preparation

(vi) delivery of speech from notes at sight

(vii) extempore paraphrase or explanation of L_1 text in L_2 (or vice versa)

(viii) consectuive translation

(ix) simultaneous translation

(x) production of coherent unprepared expository discourse on a familiar topic

(xi) demanding, requesting and providing information and assistance

(xii) expression of emotion (stylistic choices and including use of 'paralinguistic intonations, facial expression and gesture)

(xiii) suggestion, suasion and dialectics (use of language to influence behaviour and belief of listener)

(xiv) establishment and maintenance of social relations (use of language to express deference, respect, politeness, recognition of heirarchical relations in social and professional life, acquaintance, familiarity, intimacy, joking relations).

(xv) control of stylistic variables as appropriate to dynamics of social situation, and individual personality.

(b) Listening

(i) identification of linguistic text underlying utterance of speaker

(a) in slow, carefully articulated formal style

(b) in everyday colloquial speech

(c) in condensed familiar style

All in (a) simple phrases and sentences
(b) complex sentences
(c) complete conversational exchange units
(d) extended discourse

and in (a) national standard forms and accent
(b) national standard forms with regional standard accent
(c) regional dialects

and (a) under ideal transmission conditions
(b) under conditions of noise and interference

(ii) understanding of text when identified, semantic and stylistic

(iii) interpretation of identified and understood text in relation to context and situation.

(iv) retention of information in available L_2 form in short and long-term memory

(v) recognition and evaluation of linguistic and paralinguistic expressive features

(c) Reading

(i) identification of linguistic text underlying the graphic representation

(a) in print
(b) in clear cursive script ('copperplate')
(c) in reduced individual handwritings

(ii) understanding and interpretation of text

(a) in close exegesis
(b) in rapid scanning of text

for extraction of relevant information.

(d) Verbal thinking

Use of inner verbalisation for purposes of conceptual and cognitive organisation and experimentation, planning of behaviour, imaginative verbal play, counting, mnemonics.

(e) Writing

(i) writing to dictation (presupposes identification of text as listener)

(ii) précis of written or spoken text in full or note form (presupposes interpretation of text)

(iii) expansion from note form to full text

(iv) appropriate use of stereotyped formulae in letters, reports, etc.

(v) written paraphrase or explanation of L_1 text in L_2 (or vice versa)

(vi) translation with close semantic correspondence

(vii) translation with close stylistic correspondence

(viii) straightforward expository writing

(ix) use of emotive and suasive features

(x) controlled use of stylistic register features as appropriate to social roles and functions and to the expression of personality

3. LANGUAGE USES

A. Generic

(i) reports and descriptions of things, places, people, events, narration and anecdote

(ii) presentation of ideas at different levels of generalisation and abstraction

(iii) exchange of personal information between conversation partners, relating to selves and things, places, people, events, customs, habits, etc. in local environment of each, e.g. names, ages, addresses of self, friends and mutual acquaintances, size, situation and amenities of home town: nature of profession, trade or employment, hobbies and interests, sports played or watched, fashion, clubs and organisations, travels, holidays, likes and dislikes, future plans, personal history; social, political and religious views and observances.

(iv) polite formulae and rituals of meeting and leave-taking: greetings, remembrances: welcoming, introductions, compliments, thanks.

(v) summoning, attracting and focussing attention.

(vi) expression of emotions: surprise (wonder, astonishment), excitement, warmth, fervour, exuberance, enthusiasm, pain, pleasure, happiness, joy, sorrow, anger, grief, contentment, fear, anxiety, hope, coldness, merriment, jubilation.

(vii) expression of emotional relations: gratitude, sympathy, condolence and consolation, pity and compassion, tenderness, affection, endearment, congratulation, admiration, trust, communion, comradeship, solidarity, indifference, irritation, dislike, offence, scorn, ridicule, contempt, disgust, hatred, blessing and cursing, insult.

(viii) expression of social relations: forms of address, civility, reverence, sociability, affability, hospitality, conviviality, impertinence, satisfaction and dissatisfaction, complaint.

(ix) moral attitudes and linguistic discipline: praise and blame, accusation and reproach, reprimands, apologies and excuses, regret, shame, forgiveness, promises, prohibitions, sternness, severity, submission, tolerance, permission, obligation, compulsion, indignation.

(x) suasive language: cajolery and flattery, persuasion, suggestion, entreaty, offers, invitations, requests, advice, demands, orders, insistence, warnings, threats; acceptance, acquiescence, caution, resistance, refusal, rebuff.

(xi) types of linguistic interaction: chat conversation, communion, collaboration and discussion of plans and problems, debate, interview, interrogation, conference, negotiation, dispute.

(xii) dialectics: assertion, categorical and tentative agreement, querying, denial, rejection and rebuttal, claims and disclaims, certainty and doubt, disagreement, opposition, defiance, quarrelling, encouragement and support, qualification, concessions, admissions, ridicule, emphasis, modesty and understatement, boasting, frankness, discretion, tact and diplomacy.

(xiii) education: soliciting and providing information and explanations regarding language and the world, correction.

B. Specific

N.B. 'An exhaustive description of the linguistic content-purport actually requires a collaboration of all the non-linguistic sciences' - Hjelmslev.

(i) buying and selling goods and services in shops, garages, restaurants, etc.

(ii) requesting, giving and following directions and instructions.

(iii) arranging visits and rendez-vous.

(iv) arranging accomodation, travel, theatre seats, etc

(v) encounters with officials, etc. (police, customs, doctors, banks)

(vi) professional meetings and negotiations.